

Civil unrest in Syria

April/May 2011



The situation

Since mid-March 2011, Syria has been affected by countrywide anti-government protests. While sporadic pro-reform protests had previously been relatively small and peaceful, demonstrations grew significantly in size and severity following the killing of a protester in Daraa on 20 March. Despite President Bashar al-Assad's promises to implement political reforms, the continued use of force by the police and military against demonstrators has aggravated tensions and sustained anti-government demonstrations.



Assistance

11 April 2011: Political tensions remain elevated and the security forces are on a heightened state of alert in Syria following anti-government civil unrest. Further unrest is expected across the country in the short term.



red24's Crisis Response Management (CRM) centre was contacted by a client concerned about her safety in the capital, Damascus. An analyst briefed the client about the latest events in Syria and how this affected the city. A security specialist informed the client of the precautions she should take and what to do should the situation deteriorate. The

client decided to stay in Damascus and red24 called the client regularly to ensure her safety and wellbeing.



Action

25 April 2011: As many as 120 people were killed in Syria on 22 and 23 April when protests throughout the country degenerated into violence. Currently there are no indications to suggest that the security situation will improve in the short-term. Persons currently in Syria are advised to consider departing the country.

red24 elevated its risk rating for Syria on 24 April from high to extreme following an escalation in violence after a clamp-down by the Syrian government. Furthermore, the deteriorating security situation compromised overland travel and posed an indirect threat to foreigners. Following further developments in Syria, a client contacted red24 regarding the safety of 11 employees and dependents, which included a family of seven. Our team immediately contacted all of the employees and assisted them with security advice. The client decided to evacuate all 11 people and requested further assistance from red24. We outlined an evacuation plan within the first hour and this plan was executed on the ground within 14 hours of the initial call to red24's CRM centre. red24 assisted the employees with reaching an airport safely and kept in contact with all of the parties for the duration of the evacuation.

red24 then confirmed their safety and wellbeing upon arrival at their various destinations. The client thanked everyone at red24 for the "excellent assistance with this evacuation".